Universal Religion.

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THE GOSPEL OF MOHAMMEDANISM.

POEM.

FROM THE QUR'AN; SURA, 59.

Translated by Sir Edwin Arnold.

Sura the nine and fiftieth: "Fear ye God,
O true believers! and let every soul
Heed what it doth today, because tomorrow
The same thing it shall find gone forward there
To meet and make and judge it. Fear ye God,
For He knows whatsoever deeds ye do.
Be not as those who have forgotten Him,
For they are the evil-doers: not for such,
And for the heritors of Paradise,
Shall it be equal; Paradise is kept
For those thrice blessed who have ears to hear.
Lo! had we sent "the Book" unto Our hills,
Our hills had bowed their crests in reverence,
And opened to the heart their breasts of rock
To take Heaven's message. Fear ye Him who knows
Present, and Past, and Future: fear ye Him
Who is the Only, Holy, Faithful Lord,
Glorious and good, compelling to His will
All things, for all things He hath made and rules.

So rule, Al-Jabbar; make our wills
Bend, though more stubborn than the hills.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.

FROM THE "QUR'AN," CHAPP. 5 AND 83.

O ye who have received the Scriptures, now is our Apostle come unto you to make manifest unto you many things. Now is light and a perspicuous book of revelations come unto you from God. Thereby God will direct him who shall follow His good pleasure into the paths of peace. O true believers, fear God, earnestly desire a near conjunction with Him and fight for His religion that ye may be happy. Moreover, they who believe not shall suffer a painful punishment. They shall desire to go forth from the fire but they shall not go forth from it, and their punishment shall be permanent. . . . They certainly are infidels who say, God is Christ, the Son of Mary, since Christ said,'' Serve God, my Lord and your Lord.'' They certainly are infidels who say, ''God is the third of three, for there is no God besides one God. O true believers, observe justice. Let not hatred toward any induce you to wrong, but act justly and fear God, for God is fully acquainted with what ye do. When ye prepare yourselves to pray, wash your faces and your hands unto the elbows, and your feet unto the ankles. But if, on a journey, ye find no water, take fine, clean sand and rub your faces and your hands therewith. Strive to excel each other in good works; keep your contracts. O true believers, surely wine and lots and images are an abominition of the work of Satan, therefore avoid them that ye may prosper. Obey God and obey the Apostle and take heed by ourselves, for God loveth those who do good. O true believers, take care of your souls. Woe be unto those who give short measure or weight; who, when they receive by measure from other men, take the full, but when they measure unto them, or weigh unto them, defraud. Let not these think they shall be raised again on the Great Day. By no means. Verily the register of the actions of the wicked is surely in Sejjin—a book distinctly written. But the register of the actions of the righteous is in Illiyyun, a book distinctly written. Verily, the righteous shall dwell among delights, thou shalt see in their faces the brightness of joy.

PRAYER.

THE "LORD'S PRAYER" OF MOHAMMEDANISM—QUR'AN, CHAP. I.

Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures, the most merciful, the King of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship and

of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious; not of those against whom Thou art incensed, nor those who go astray.

THE DISCOURSE.

"Lo Illah il Allah, Mohammed rasool Allahi."
(There is no God but Allah, Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.)

We come now to the latest of the seven great religions, the least appreciated and the most misunderstood, albeit that Mohammedanism, both in origin and in type, is nearer Judaism and Christianity than any other of the great systems of faith. It originated thirteen centuries ago in the Arabian peninsula, where the streams of culture and of commerce met in the middle ages, where the markets of exchange were stationed for India's treasures and the products of the Mediterranean coasts. This religion is today acknowledged by two hundred million souls and covers an area equal to one-third of the globe. The Niger and the Nile, the Jordan and the Ganges, the Maritza and the Yang-tse-Kiang, fertilize Mohammedan soil. Twice did this religion threaten to overrun all Europe; in 732, when it was checked at Tours by Charles Martel, and again in 1683, when John, King of Poland, at the head of twenty thousand soldiers defeated the Mohammedan army at Vienna. To the early representatives of this religion the world is indebted for the immense services they rendered in the advancement of civilization. For it was they who transmitted the treasures of Greek literature and philosophy from the middle ages to the renaissance, they who originated the graceful art-forms of which the Taj-Mahal and the Alhambra are the most famous specimens; they who contributed to the sciences of algebra and astronomy, chemistry and medicine; they who dotted the Saracen empire with universities and they who established at Bagdad and at Cairo two of the most renowned libraries of the world.

The founder of Mohammedanism has been called "the lying prophet." His name has been used as a synonym for Satan and his followers have been described as "part of the infernal host." Luther addressed him with the words: "Oh fie, you horrid devil, you damned Mohammed;" and Melancthon affirmed he was "inspired by Satan." For seven

centuries not a sound in defence or behalf of Mohammed was heard. The first word of truth and justice was spoken in the fourteenth century by Sir John Mandeville, an English traveler, and his tribute was a veritable bugle-note in the night of bigotry and malice. Four centuries later Lessing, in his "Nathan der Weise," registered his profound respect for the essential worth of Mohammedanism. And then came Carlyle, fairly stunning the British public by placing Mohammed among the heroes of history. Yet, in our own generation, Christian criticism, born of ignorance and prejudice, perpetuates opinions of Mohammed that have no root in truth and slanders that are without any real warrant whatsoever still resound from pulpit, platform and press.

Mohammed was born in 571 at Mecca, one of the chief centers of Arabian commerce and culture, visited annually by some two hundred thousand Muslims in accordance with the religious law requiring a pilgrimage, at least once during life, to the prophet's birthplace. His father died before the child was born and his mother before he had reached his teens. How deeply he felt the deprivations of orphanage is attested by many passages in the Qur'an, enjoining upon the faithful the duty of tender regard for the person of orphans and scrupulous care not to touch their property. Bereft of both father and mother the lad was adopted, first by his grandfather and later by his uncle, a rich, generous and magnanimous man, who disapproved of his nephew's doctrines, yet on grounds of kinship and personal regard gave him freely of the abundance of his possessions. Financial reverses came to this noble guardian and the boy was obliged to earn his own living. For several years he tended sheep till, at the age of twenty-four, he entered the service of a rich widow, Kadijah, as camel-driver and conductor of caravans journeying between Jerusalem and Damascus. She became infatuated with him, married him and though fifteen years his senior, their married life appears to have been both happy and mutually inspiring. Kadijah, indeed, seems to have been the very antithesis of Lucrezia, the wife of Andrea del Sarto, the faultless painter who felt he might have been also the soulful painter, rivalling Raphael and Angelo, had she only given him sympathy, interest and inspiration, all of which

Kadijah gave Mohammed. She nursed him in his days of illness, strengthened him in hours of weakness, encouraged him and kept him up to the level of the best of which he was capable as long as she lived.

No authentic portrait of the prophet has come down to us. But from various accounts we learn that Mohammed was a man of medium height, with a massive, well-developed head, his dark curly hair streaming down to his broad shoulders and his black, restless eyes looking out beneath heavy eye-lashes and eyebrows. His nose was somewhat aquiline and his teeth were regular and white as hail-stones. From his fair and upright dealing he derived the name, "Al-Amin," or "the faithful." His was the simple life, lived in humblest style, even unto austerity; for he would often go for months together without eating a hearty meal while daily he ate the plainest food, lighting his own fires, mending his own clothes and shoes, having given his slaves their freedom. The following beautiful story illustrates impressively a virtue he often manifested as well as taught. Sleeping one day under a palm tree, he awoke suddenly to find an enemy named Du'thur standing over him with drawn sword. "O, Muhammad, who is there now to save thee?" cried the man. "God," answered Muhammad. Du'thur dropped his sword. Muhammad seized it, and cried in turn: "O, Du'thur, who is there now to save thee?" "No one," replied Du'thur. "Then learn from me to be merciful," said Muhammad, and handed him back the weapon. Du'thur became one of his firmest friends. Mohammed's marriage to a rich widow afforded him opportunity to gratify his taste for reflection and meditation. Not far from his house, on a bluff overlooking the blazing sands of the desert, was a cave, and thither he frequently repaired to study, not books, for he could not read; but Nature and the tablets of his own heart. Afflicted with a nervous disorder that occasionally caused him loss of consciousness, it was in one of these attacks that he became apprised of his mission. We are told he fell into convulsions, streams of perspiration flowed down his cheeks, his eyes burned like glowing coals and he was about to leap from the brink of a precipice to end his misery by suicide when, the legend says, he saw the figure and heard the voice of the angel Gabriel,

telling him, "Thou art the apostle of the Lord." Rushing to his wife he exclaimed, "am I in truth a prophet or am I mad?" She answered, "no harmful thing has happened thee; rejoice, thou speakest the truth. Thou dost not return evil for evil, thou art kind to relatives and friends, thou dost not gossip, thou wilt yet surely be the prophet of prophets." Note in this reply the fine conviction of Kadijah that the surest test of fitness for a prophetic career is nobility and purity of life. Mohammed hesitated at first, even as did Jesus at the outset of his prophetic career, but at last the belief is fixed that he has been called to be the bearer of a message. But the Meccans received him not. They called him fool, madman, liar; so that he shared the fate of others of his vocation, illustrating the proverb that a prophet is not honored in his own country. But opposition only intensified his consecration. When his uncle besought him to cease his attempt to convert the Meccans, bidding him name the price of silence, he replied: "Though they gave me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to bring me back from my undertaking, yet will I not pause till the Lord carry His cause to victory, or till I die for it." Abu Talib replied: "Go in peace, son of my brother, and say what thou wilt, for by God I will on no condition abandon thee." Eventually assassination was planned and the prophet hearing of it resolved on flight, making his way on a night in July, 622, to the city due north of Mecca, now known as Medina. This year of the flight, or "Hejira," marks the beginning of the Mohammedan era. Hitherto Mohammed had been a preacher proclaiming unwelcome truth, denouncing vices of his countrymen and rebuking low standards of business dealing. Now he assumes the role of legislator, ruler, conqueror, heading a defensive and aggressive movement which meets with increasing success, the number of followers passing the five hundred mark within two years. For eight more years the prophet continues his conquering crusade, aiming to win over all Arabia to his message and claims, till, on the eighth of June, 632, he died, leaving to his beloved disciple, Abu-Bekr, and to succeeding califs that task of missionary expansion which gradually resulted in establishing the founder's faith over an empire greater than that of Rome and almost making it the one religion of the civilized

world. Before we pass from the founder's life to his message, let it be said that he was certainly not an impostor, though both orthodox Christians and crude rationalists unite in the assertion. Voltaire voiced the view of the latter class in a verse that won the approval of both:

"Chaque peuple à son tour a brillé sur la terre,
Par les lois, par les arts et surtout par les guerres.
Le temps de l'Arabie est enfin venu,
Il faut un nouveau culte, il faut de nouveaux fers
Il faut un nouveau Dieu pour l'aveugle univers."

Credulous humanity had been victimized by the crafty prophet of Arabia, who palmed off a new God, a new cult and new fetters on an unsuspecting public! "Amen," cried the crude rationalists, because to them all religion is deception, an invention of politic priests and scheming prophets. But among the notions to be relegated to the realm of prejudice and superstition are these: Religion is an invention, all prophets are impostors and Mohammed perpetrated the most egregious fraud on record. The proofs that Mohammed was no crafty cheat, no scheming impostor are not far to seek and they are numerous. Let me cite two. At Mecca Mohammed had received a handsome income as custodian of the Kaaba, or sacred stone worshipped by the residents and by the visiting pilgrims. The religious practices connected with this worship came to be regarded by Mohammed as sheer superstition. To criticize them meant certain loss of his position. Yet he did not hesitate to denounce them and promptly surrendered his profitable custodianship. Is such conduct the mark of an impostor? Again, when implored to desist from his radical and revolutionizing preaching, he to name his own price for the silence he was to keep, he repudiated the tempting offer, preferring the luxury of his convictions and his mission, with poverty if need be, to the allurements of conservatism, ease and wealth. Surely this could never be the part of an impostor. Nothing but the bigotry, jealousy and malice of his enemies originated the charge of imposture and nothing but blind prejudice and lazy indifference to truth can account for the perpetuation of the charge.

Like the other great religions, Mohammedanism arose as a protest. At the time of the prophet's appearance there were three types of idolatry extant in Arabia. First and oldest, the native astrology with star and planet worship antedating the advent of Jews and Christians. Second, Jewish idolatry which took the form of bestowing worship upon Ezra the scribe and probable editor of the Pentateuch. Mohammed observed and complained of this "Ezrolatry" (Sura, ix, 30). Third, Christian idolatry, which consisted not only in the worship of images and relics, but also of three gods, for the "trinity" had here degenerated into tritheism (Sura, 5). Now Mohammed's wish and aim was to turn the people away from these various idolatries and bring them back to what he thought was the original Semitic faith, the one original source of both Judaism and Christianity. The thought of instituting a new religion seems never to have entered the prophet's mind. His one thought was to restore the ancestral faith of Abraham with its simple doctrine of pure monotheism and obedience to the one true God. This, he thought, was Abraham's religion, this, he was persuaded, should be reinstated and all forms of idolatry, indigenous, Jewish, Christian—abolished. The time for vindicating "the true faith" had arrived. Mohammed believed he was the prophet to whom it had been revealed. Five other great prophets, he said, there had been before him, namely, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. To each, he believed, a revelation had been vouchsafed and that each in turn was superseded by its successor, Mohammed receiving the final revelation and establishing the absolute religion. All this the prophet sincerely believed, regarding himself simply as the latest medium through whom the Mighty One had made known His word. Nowhere does Mohammed make extravagant or extraordinary claims for himself. "I am only a man like the rest of you. I am not a miracle-worker, not an angel. I am frail and liable to err. I am an apostle, a prophet, the last of the prophets." In these phrases did he describe himself again and again in the Qur'an. Nor does he think that to him has been revealed all that the omniscient Mind contains. In the thirty-first Sura we read: "If all the seven seas were changed to ink and all trees to pens, they could not write all the things God

has to reveal to man."

The revelation which Mohammed believed he received constitutes the "Qur'an," the sacred book, or Bible, of the Mohammedans. It is, without exception, the most deeply revered and widely read of all the sacred scriptures of the world, its use being much more extensive than that of the New Testament in Christian countries. Moreover, it is believed by the faithful that this book existed from all eternity in heaven, whence it was sent down, piecemeal to the prophet, by one angel or another and following the delivery dictated to a secretary who committed it to writing on scraps of papyrus, leather, or whatever material was available at the time, the separate parts collected and edited two years after the prophet's death by Abu-Bekr. Ten years later (642) it was revised and issued, as a final recension, by Uthman, the third Khalifa, all earlier versions having been ordered destroyed. Thus the Koran is unique among Bibles in that it is the work of a single mind and has a uniform text in all editions. Its contents may be described as a collection or potpourri of myths, legends, narratives, legal rules, ceremonial injunctions, moral precepts. The Qur'an is a reservoir into which, through Mohammed's mind, many different streamlets have been emptied. That Jewish and Christian stories should form part of the book is not strange, for, as conductor of caravans through Judea and Syria, Mohammed must have acquired considerable information on Biblical subjects. Tales of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, related by not very competent reporters entered the prophet's head and fermented there. What he knew of Bible characters he never derived from direct contact with the Bible itself. The probability is he never saw a Hebrew Bible nor a Greek New Testament. But many a Hebrew story as recorded in rabbinical books he doubtless heard, while the apocalyptic books of the Old and New Testaments—Joel, Daniel, Revelation—with their thrilling accounts of the Judgment Day told symbolically by reference to figures, animals, numbers, all these exerted their influence upon Mohammed as almost every page of the Qur'an testifies. That there should be contradictions in the Qur'an is to be expected from the very nature and manner of the revelations. But Mohammed never had any scruples about "progres-

sive revelation'' as applied to himself. If experience proved a certain ''revealed'' ordinance to be unsatisfactory another ordinance was revealed later on to supplement, correct or perhaps even to annul the original revelation. In this connection it is instructive to know that the scepticism and agnosticism which have resulted from the discovery of contradictions and limitations in the Christian Bible have their parallel in Mohammedan countries where a marked defection from the faith is taking place among those who see the inadequacy of the Qur'an as a moral and political guide. As many thoughtful Chritians have ceased to follow the cross and abandoned their orthodoxy when enlightened upon the fallibility of their Bible, so there are intelligent, thinking Mohammedans who for a similar reason have ceased to follow the crescent and are feeling about for a new foundation of belief.

Of all the Bibles of the great religions, the Qur'an is the least attractive to the general reader. Curiosity draws him to its pages but he is quickly repelled because there is no continuity of thought, no charm of style, both the thought and the style suggesting the camel of the desert, at liberty to browse wherever stubble is to be found. The one hundred and fourteen chapters of the book have superscriptions indeed, but these for the most part bear no relation to the contents. The events chronicled follow no chronological order and only the most patient scholarship of specialists has enabled us to shape from this literary waste and tangle the prophet's thought and teachings. Had Mohammed known how to write there might have been no such difficulties. As the ''revelations'' fell from his lips they were caught by a secretary, jotted down on any material ready to hand and never connectedly arranged during the prophet's life. He having been neither a theologian, nor an historian, nor a philosopher, but an enthusiast, spoke his revelations as they came regardless of their agreement with or contradiction of earlier ones. His thought possessed him, not he his thought. From his surcharged brain it rushed on undiked, unchanneled, too swift to allow of skilful or consistent expression. Carlyle complained that the Qur'an was the most toilsome reading he ever undertook. He described it as ''a wearisome, confused jumble, endless iterations, long winded-

ness, entanglement most crude, incondite, insupportable stupidity in short.'' But, thanks to the labor of Biblical scholars, who have applied the principles of the higher criticism to the Qur'an as to the Old and New Testaments, we can place its chapters in their chronological order, divide the book into three sections corresponding to the three epochs of the prophet's career and see the spirit of each reflected in the chapters of each section. The first epoch, marked by misgiving, doubt, struggle, misappreciation and opposition, is readily discerned in a series of chapters aglow with enthusiasm and bordering on frenzy, recording his visions with a fervor that persuades us of his sincerity. The second epoch, the period of appreciation and success, is evidenced in the chapters of reasoning and argument; calm, dispassionate, yet not void of enthusiasm, addressed to converts who recognize and acknowledge the authority of the speaker. The third epoch finds the prophet prone to make concessions and compromises for the sake of still greater success. He has grown shrewd, calculating, politic, in his aggressive propaganda and all this is reflected in a group of chapters whose weak, willowy utterances indicate descent from the plane of a high ideal which had been transfigured by sincere consecration and perfervid enthusiasm.

Turning to the Qur'an, as we have turned to the Bibles of the other great religions in search of their respective gospels, we observe that the duty of submission to God, the Resistless, mighty, omnipotent one, is enjoined with never wearying emphasis. **Submission,** that is the note which Mohammedanism contributes to the symphony of Universal Religion. The very name of the religion, ''Islam,'' means submission. For the faithful never speak of their religion as ''Mohammedanism,'' but always as ''Islam.' Then, too, in the ninety and nine names of Allah, ''the Strong One,'' the idea of submission is predominant. He is called, ''the one to whom everything is subject, the Lord of all creatures, the Lord of the East and the West, the all-governing, the all-compelling.'' He is the Mighty One to whom all things and all creatures must submit and whose mercy is due to his very omnipotence. He is likened unto the wind and all humanity unto a field of grain that sways with the blowing of the wind. He is a Sultan, a des-

pot, and Muslims are they who submit (the word Muslim having the same root as Islam), they who, like the willows, bend before the blast; rather than like the infidels, who resist it, as does the oak. Thus the fundamental religious duty of Islam is submission and it implies three primary obligations. First, abhorrence of idolatry as the most heinous of sins, bestowing on other supposed gods the homage due to Allah alone. When the subjects of an autocratic Sultan dare to enthrone a usurper and to do him homage, they are punished to the full extent of the civil law. Even so idolators who dare to worship any other god than the heavenly Sultan, are punished to the full extent of the religious law, enunciated repeatedly in the Koran and to be fulfilled on the Judgment Day. Every mosque bears witness to Mohammed's hatred of idolatry, no statuary, no images, no reproductions of any human forms are to be seen, solely the arabesque ornaments whose geometric traceries reproduce only objects from the inanimate world. Second, the duty of submission involved the obligation to extend the heavenly Sultan's Kingdom on earth, and by force if need be, because refusal to recognize and do homage to Him is rebellion and rebellion must be suppressed, by persuasion if possible, by the sword if necessary—a doctrine that appealed to the military temper of the Saracen and which Mohammed set forth by precept and example. Such is the logic of a monarchical creed. This, however, must be said concerning Islam's appeal to force, that the Mohammedan sword has oftener been tempered with mercy than has the Christian, albeit that the genius and spirit of Christianity oppose appeal to force. When Omar captured Jerusalem he suffered every Christian life to be spared, when Geoffrey of Lorraine captured the city he put ten thousand Muslims to merciless death. The third obligation identified with the duty of submission is obedience to the commandments of Allah as taught in the Qur'an, with special care to have one's moral account "square" when the Judgment Day dawns. For then will the heavenly Sultan determine the fate of each human soul. Then will a man walking to the judgment seat be met by a loathsome looking object to which he will say, "be gone," but it will reply, "I cannot, for I am thy conscience." Then will

the fraudulent buyer and the fraudulent seller walk to the judgment seat with the goods they fraudulently bought or sold tied to their necks and dragging behind them. Then too will the righteous have opened unto them the gates of Paradise,—no mere reproduction of a Turkish harem,—having its sensuous delights indeed, but its spiritual elements besides. Most frankly and even naively is the Mohammedan motive for right conduct presented in terms of Paradise and Hell. Nowhere else is the utilitarian motive for virtue more explicitly set forth than in the Qur'an.

Five "pillars" of fidelity are set up, constituting the moral and religious requirements binding upon all believers. (1) Repetition of the creed—"there is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet." (2) Prayer and ablutions; five times daily, at the call of the "Muezzin," from his minaret. (3) Almsgiving, two and a half per cent of one's goods to be given the poor, (4) fasting, from sunrise to sunset in the month Ramadan, in which the prophet fled to Medina from Mecca, (5) a pilgrimage, at least once in one's lifetime, to Mecca.

Three commandments are given special prominence in the ethical teachings of Mohammedanism. These relate to total abstinence, cleanliness and humaneness. Essentially characteristic of Mohammed's legislation was his insistence on abstinence from liquor. Drunkenness is the one vice most feared in tropical countries and generally condemned as a violation of divine law. This prevailing conception was adopted by the prophet as an integral part of his moral code. His opposition to Christianity was based in part on its failure to put an absolute veto on the use of wine. General Lew Wallace, after prolonged residence at Constantinople declared that while Christian drunkards were to be seen daily on the streets, he never once saw a drunken Muslim. The requirement of ablutions five times daily, before prayers, led very naturally to the promotion of cleanliness.

A "Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals" is unknown in Mohammedan countries, except in cities overrun by Christians, and in Turkish cemeteries, it is said, the four corners of every slab that covers a grave are grooved to catch the rainfall and so attract the birds to drink and sing over

the place where their human brethren sleep. This tender concern for the lower animals results from the prophet's injunctions touching humaneness which appear again and again in the pages of the Qur'an.

Concerning the charge of advocating polygamy and slavery, made against Mohammed, it should be remembered that these evils existed before his day and the most that could then be done was to improve the condition of slaves and the position of women, both of which Mohammed achieved. He gave women rights of property, he regulated divorce and put restrictions on polygamy by fixing the number of wives at four,—a law that provoked no general antagonism because it made allowance for the physical passion of the tropics, even as the law prohibiting use of intoxicants conformed to the popular belief as to the wisdom of practicing abstinence and therefore the law was readily approved.

When we reflect upon the utterly uncivilized character of the tribes that inhabited Africa and parts of Asia at the time of Mohammed's appearance as a reformer, we may well believe that the doctrine of submission to an irresistible Ruler whose decrees are to be unquestioningly accepted and obeyed was exactly suited to the needs of these peoples, belonging as they did to the childhood stage of human development, when simple obedience to rules regardless of their meaning or purpose is the highest possible virtue. For peoples who have evolved from that stage the gospel of Islam, or submission, can have no inspiration. To the everlasting credit of Mohammedanism it must be said that in lifting to a higher plane of life the various tribes of Africa and Asia to which it ministered it accomplished that which contemporary Judaism and Christianity in those localities were never able to achieve. In this civilizing work Islam performed an invaluable service to the world.

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